

## Protecting the piping plover

People are squawking and flapping over the killing of sea gulls on South Monomoy Island and the protection of piping plovers in Plymouth. Both issues show the complexities of managing nature, particularly when it tangles with human nature. Both require patience, dialogue, and a long view of the beach.

A consensus is jelling around the Monomoy controversy, in which the US Fish and Wildlife Service appears to be backing off a shortsighted attempt to fix an ecosystem that wasn't broken.

### **Two for the beach**

Last year the regional office of the agency poisoned 5,000 sea gulls on Monomoy to make room for the endangered roseate tern and the plover — a misguided effort, as these birds do not have ideal habitat there. Some of the gulls flew off and died in people's swimming pools.

This year, officials wisely stuck to limited shooting and trapping. Now the Interior Department is reassessing. Experience indicates that further killing is not needed.

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The argument is even more contentious in

Plymouth, where protesters presented a petition to the Board of Selectmen last week demanding freer access to the town's beach and where town officials rescinded an agreement with state and federal agencies promising to protect the piping plover. That agreement was drawn up after a recreational vehicle ran over a plover chick on the beach last year.

While protesters insist they want a beach for birds and people, there is plainly a misunderstanding about what federal and state laws require.

Eighty beaches in Massachusetts are home to piping plovers. About half of those areas allow recreational vehicle use, and most of them have had to thrash out community anger about limits. The efforts are paying off: The plover, which lives on open, flat sand, is multiplying steadily here and increasing more in New England than anywhere else in the country.

Man, charged with protecting earth's treasures as well as enjoying them, can adjust his life with relative ease to accommodate a delicate creature that can't. Short-term inconvenience creates a better future for all living things.